



Member Profile

Harris Finkelstein

Reston, Va., USA

Harris Finkelstein grew up on Long Island just five miles from Bethpage State Park. “My dad and I only occasionally played the Black Course,” he says. “We usually opted for one of the other four courses.”

In 2017 Finkelstein traveled to Brora, Scotland, with a friend for a golf vacation. They played several of the northern courses, including Brora, Golspie, Nairn, and Royal Dornoch.

“While there I had a notion that I should make the game simpler – hitting a ball with a stick as opposed to all the data that golf was throwing at us,” he says. “Immediately upon returning to the U.S., I bought a beautiful set of 1969 MacGregor irons (aluminum shafts) and some Wilson woods. I played a few rounds with those and quickly began researching and shopping for hickory.”

Finkelstein and his wife, Kate, have two young boys. “Galileo, my youngest occasionally plays with me while Jonah, the older one, is of the opinion that golf is the stupidest endeavor ever invented,” he says.

How often do you play hickories?

I play only hickories. Sometimes I get an itch to hit balls and don't have time to go play and I'll go to the driving range. I don't hit hard range balls with my hickories and I have a set of pyratone Burke irons that I keep in my car.

What's in your play set?

I started with all Tad Moore replicas. I have the Pall Mall 3-Star spoon which I still play with. For irons I started with a set of the Tad Moore Tom Morris 1930 model. I started shopping Craigslist and Facebook Marketplace for clubs, learning how to work on them but found that the swing weights on most things I found were far too light. I recently acquired a set of irons which I am loving:

Nicoll Zenith 2 iron
Nicoll Big Shooter mashie iron
Nicoll Big Shooter mashie
Nicoll Big Shooter spade mashie
Unknown Mashie niblick
Nicoll Indicator niblick
Brown-Vardon type putter

Favorite club?

Right now it's probably the Zenith 2-iron. That thing just feels like it wants to be swung.

What ball do you play?

I prefer something soft – Wilson Duo and Callaway Supersoft are my two current favorites.

Favorite course for hickories?

Brora Golf Club is the place where the idea of playing hickory first jelled in my mind. I recently got to go back there with my hickory set and it did not disappoint. On my final day there I went out before 5:30 a.m. in a nice light rain carrying only four clubs – golf doesn't get much better for me than that.

Any particular player or aspect of golf history you especially enjoy?



Harris Finkelstein is shown on the Brora Golf Course in Scotland. The serious look? “That’s possibly just me wondering whether four layers is enough for July in the Highlands,” he says.

It's just everywhere. I love looking for clubs and whenever I see a name on a club I try to see if I can find something about him/her. Not too long ago I saw some beautiful Nicoll irons made for Spencer Murphy. I learned he was the pro at Glen Oaks CC on Long Island (where I had my first job as a caddy) and he came up with many innovative ideas including complimentary wooden tees.

Favorite thing about hickory golf?

Certainly the golf – the way it makes me think about and play the game. Another related aspect I enjoy is how it has changed the way I think about golf courses. Gaining understanding in course architecture and history adds another layer to the fun of playing with hickory.

Ideas to promote hickory golf?

I believe it's more than promoting hickory. I think the current state of golf in the U.S. is not in a great place. The focus of what's being thrown at golfers through the various avenues of golf marketing is mostly about emulating what we see on TV. For the average golfer, I think this leads to an increase in frustration as well as an increase in slow play. In consequence, golf is simply less fun. Playing the local courses with hickories is a great way to show there are other ways to play the game. Talking them up and explaining how they've changed the game for me and most importantly, how much fun they are is something I thoroughly enjoy.

Most recent book on golf that you read?

Not exactly a bedside read, but World Atlas of Golf is never far away. My wife recently went through the arduous task of becoming a certified yoga instructor and at one point she told me I should read the Bhagavad Gita. It is beautiful and seemed entirely about golf to me.